

Chester & North Wales CTC Annual Report 2006-2007

Introduction

Last year's Annual Report ended on a challenging note for the year ahead. This year's Annual Report starts by acknowledging just what a challenge it has been, particularly with the untimely death of Graham Mills our President and CTC Cymru Chair. It is to everyone's credit that we have successfully come through a difficult year. Our programme of rides and events continues to attract new members and participants. Our Awards Committee have had two nominations supported by National Office in their first year of operation and the DA was commended for its initiative in creating an Awards Committee. Our sections have flourished to such an extent that we now have nine active sections within the DA plus a number of informal groups. On any criteria this must rate as a good achievement for a difficult year, but for this to continue we have to face the immediate challenge of finding the volunteers to run the DA, our sections, our events and our rides. With so many DA posts falling vacant this year then as never before our future rests in your hands.

Looking back over the past year one event stands out; one event overshadows all the others; the tragic and untimely death of Graham Mills while he had so much more to give. His contributions to the DA and to CTC Cymru which he helped to found are immense but Graham's involvement in cycling was much wider still. His ready smile and support for others together with his sense of understatement marked him out as a friend to many in the cycling community throughout the country. His loss leaves a gaping hole in the DA and in CTC Cymru which we are struggling to fill. In his memory the Graham Mills memorial ride on the 30th September, led by acting President Des James, attracted some 52 riders to witness the presentation of a posthumous CTC Certificate of Merit for a lifetime of dedication to cycling: a fitting tribute indeed to someone who had done so much for cycling.

Other than the annual President's Ride which, as noted above, was run in memory of Graham Mills most of the DA's events took place as planned. As usual the year started with New Years Day meets at the Carden Arms and McLeans Pub for lunch. This was followed by Dave Hill's sell out Himalaya Slide Show leading to a full programme of spring and summer riding events. This year's DA lunch proved to be even more popular than usual with 35 members from all the DA sections meeting at the Red Lion, Dodleston. Unfortunately, and despite the best efforts of the DA Committee, it proved impossible to continue with Graham Mills planned Two Lakes Audax.

Changes have continued within the DA itself. Early on in the year the DA was pleased to welcome the Café Hoppers, based in the Wrexham area, as the latest of the DA's official sections. With rides taking place every Tuesday and Saturday throughout the year this is already an active and thriving section. For most of this year the DA has been able to count on nine active sections operating across the DA area. This is now about to change with the imminent loss of the long established Wrexham Section. Due to the pressure of work, since his retirement, Des James has decided to relinquish his role as Wrexham Section Secretary (a post he has held for over 20 years) and as a result the section is likely to merge with the Café Hoppers to form the Wrexham Café Hoppers Section.

Even more changes are predicted for the coming year as the DA and its sections get to grips with the requirements of the new Policy Handbook for Local Groups agreed by CTC Council this summer. This new Policy Handbook sweeps away the old DA Guide, which has seen only limited change since its last major revision in 1985, to provide a completely new and updated constitution for all CTC local groups including all DAs and sections. While this new constitution contains many welcome changes its new and complex structure of groups and activities will leave many members bemused: not least the complete abolition of DAs and sections which the Policy handbook describes as "historic CTC groups organising cycling activities primarily for CTC members".

Membership has increased for the third year running from 824 last year to 868 paid up members living in the DA area at the end of September this year.

DA Committee

Your Committee met seven times over the course of the year under the chairmanship of Graham Mills and latterly Des James. To help spread the work of the DA Secretary a new post of Membership Secretary was created in the spring. Des James kindly agreed to take on this additional responsibility

and writes to all new CTC members and existing members moving into the DA area with details of the DA and our activities. CTC's national councillor for the North West region, David Robinson, has found time from his busy schedule to attend a number of DA Committee meetings while also representing Council in the North West region.

Arranging DA events and activities continues to form the main focus of the Committee's work. For next year a full programme of events has already been put in place with a summary given at the end of this report. An organiser is still being sought for the coming year's Vets' 100 event in early July. If you would be interested in playing your part in organising this very popular event the DA Committee would be pleased to hear from you.

This year rather more time than your Committee would wish has had to be given to the consideration of a succession of new policy documents from CTC National Office. First was the "CTC Strategic Vision for 2007 to 2012". Your Committee were not overly impressed with this document seeing it more as the imposition of a top down business model rather than the bottom up membership model of the past. Indeed the strategy contained only one indirect reference to DA's and sections in the whole document. Although comments were submitted to National Office the strategy was sadly approved unchanged at the CTC AGM in April. Next to be received was a consultation draft of the Policy Handbook for Local Groups. Like many other DAs, Chester & North Wales, was not reticent in making its views known to National Office and as a result of the representations made by DAs the document has been substantially improved although aspects, such as voting arrangements at AGMs, still leave much to be desired. To complete the package of new policies a new "Local Groups Toolkit" came into force in the early summer.

A new local printer was found for the DA quarterly magazine The Link from among our own membership early in the year. This has enabled the Link Editor to further improve the quality of the printed magazine while also removing the need to collate, assemble and staple the copies prior to distribution. However a heavier workload in his consultancy business means that our Editor, Dave Hill, has been forced to reduce his involvement and will be standing down at this AGM. The Christmas edition will therefore be the last under his editorship. In order to keep the Link going we now need a new editor to work with Dave Hill on the Christmas edition before taking full responsibility for the magazine.

Before moving on, I would like to pay tribute to the work of all my colleagues but in particular to Des James, Barry Davis, Kate Alston and Reg Waud who are standing down from the DA Committee at this AGM after many years dedicated service to Chester & North Wales CTC.

Awards Committee

In its first year of operation, the committee has been instrumental in processing the following awards: First the posthumous award of a Certificate of Merit for Graham Mills, our late President. In the unavoidable absence of Mrs. Brenda Mills, this was presented to Dave Hill, acting on her behalf, on the occasion of the Graham Mills Memorial Ride on the 30th September.

Second a Certificate of Commendation to The Eureka Café, Two Mills for services to cyclists. Arrangements have been made for the Certificate to be presented to The Eureka on Saturday 3rd November (the day before our AGM) around mid morning.

There is still time for anyone to make a recommendation for CTC's Volunteer of the Year Award for 2007. This award will be presented at the CTC's Annual Dinner next year.

DA Activities

An extensive range of events have been held this year starting with our usual New Years Day Meets and ending with this AGM.

New Years Day Meets

Both of the official New Years Day meets were well attended with a particularly large turnout of 43 members at the Carden Arms and 33 at McLeans. Both venues are back on the programme for the coming year.

Himalaya Slide Show

With 133 tickets sold for this unique event DA members were clearly looking forward to a taste of cycling in the Himalayas. The weather however had other ideas and with monsoon like conditions some members were left stranded and unable to get through to Chester. Given the conditions a surprising number managed to make it to enjoy a particularly riveting evening. Profits have gone into the club funds. Thanks to Dave Hill for slides, talk and organisation.

The Spring 50 mile Tourist Trial

March came and just a handful of entries received. The more experienced said don't worry, this always happens and sure enough, in the two weeks remaining the entries rolled in. On the day itself the weather was good so another half dozen joined on the line. 74 riders started off from the Scout HQ at Kinnerton and all but one, owing to a minor accident, completed in their chosen 4 or 5 hours. The youngest rider was aged just 15 and there were a high percentage of vets. A couple of tandemists took part and 10 women. Lots of thanks to the many helpers; the event could not have taken place without you all. Special mention must be made of Graham Mills who kept in touch in the run up to the event to see how it was going and who was sadly missed riding it on the day.

Treasure Hunt & Map Reading

This year the events were held at Gwersyllt near Wrexham. The weather was fine and dry. The Treasure Hunt attracted a field of 17 riders who rode as a mix of individuals and teams. All of the riders scored well with Mike Batchelor (West London DA) and Mark Beauchamp (North Hampshire DA) tying for first place with all of the questions answered correctly. Close behind were local riders Alun Jones and John Hamblett. The team event was won by Janet Gregory and Annabel Dickson. Eight riders competed in the Map Reading Competition held in the afternoon. Competitors had 23 grid references to help them find local road signs and distances to various destinations. The need to avoid time penalties was amply demonstrated by the tie for first place between Mike Batchelor (West London DA) and Andy Polakowski (who would have finished first had he not incurred time penalties for arriving back five minutes late). John Hamblett and Dave Statham were the next best local CTC riders. Thanks to Lowri Evans for her organisation and helpers George Adams and Anne Jones.

Cycling for Women Weekend Events

With the promise of support from National Office three sections organised women's oriented rides for the Cycling for Women Weekend this year. Things started to go wrong when, very late in the day, National Office re-branded the rides under the "Five Miles for Fabulous" title. Nevertheless the rides by Eryri Section, through the quiet lanes of Ynys Mon, Two Mills Section to the Ice Cream Farm and Chester Section to Wettenhall all went ahead to the complete enjoyment of those who took part.

Two Lakes 100k Audax

Your committee struggled long and hard in an attempt to continue with this event, but with the passing of Graham Mills earlier in the year it just proved to be too big a challenge. Reluctantly the committee were left with no option but to cancel the event.

The Cheshire Cycleway Rides

Even though it was Dorothy Clift's and Hazel McDougall's third year running this event they were somewhat anxious on the day before the rides with only 29 registered riders for the 50 mile ride and 19 for the 100 mile ride. However, with last minute entries "on the line" they ended up with 47 for the 50 and 38 for the 100! The day started overcast and dry, ideal conditions in fact. The sun came out later and warmed things up but no thunder storms or hailstones this year, thank goodness. The new owners of Carriers at Hatchmere drew widespread praise for their Danish pastries, the WI at the Jessie Hughes Institute were reliable with beans on toast and at Bollington all that was left at the end of the day were two pieces of cake. Everyone seemed to enjoy the day and many appreciative remarks were received. Thanks to all who helped and all who rode.

The Triennial Vets' 100

Des James organised the Triennial Vets' 100 on the 1st July. With good weather and well over 100 riders from all parts of the country, all of whom finished safely, the event was an outstanding success.

The Welsh Festival of Cycling

This year's Welsh Festival of Cycling was held at Llandovery at the end of July. The riding events, both road and off-road, were well supported. Sadly a successful festival was marred by an unfortunate accident suffered by Emrys Jones on the final day.

DA Lunch at the Red Lion

Despite a last minute change to the venue the DA lunch at the Red Lion proved to be a huge success with a repeat planned for the coming year. The weather was favourable and 35 members drawn from all the DA sections enjoyed the hospitality and a wide and varied menu.

The Graham Mills Memorial Ride

This year's President's Ride held in memory of our late President Graham Mills attracted some 52 riders to join the ride from Christleton Pond to the Jessie Hughes Institute in Eaton. Two routes were available with Acting President Des James leading the larger group on the traditional route. The highlight of the day was the presentation of a posthumous CTC Certificate of Merit for a lifetime's service to cycling. The Certificate was presented by Mike Cross on behalf of the Awards Committee to Dave Hill who received it on behalf of Graham Mills widow Brenda. The finishing touch was added by Dave Hill who confirmed that an acre of woodland with a bench had been purchased from the donations made.

Llysfasi Hill Climb and Freewheel Event

Once again the Hill Climb and Freewheel were blessed with good weather. There were strong fields for both events partly due to the DATC being particularly close this year which encouraged entries from other DAs. 24 riders competed in the hill climb. Everyone finished with just over eight minutes separating the field. Kim Suffolk of Leicestershire was first in a time of 6 minutes 37 seconds with Frank Kinlan second in 7 minutes 29 seconds. Dave Statham won the Super Vets title followed by Tony Wilkinson. Richard Delf won the Junior title and came in ninth overall. The Ladies title was won by Janet Gregory with a time of 8 minutes 23 seconds. This year's freewheel was aided by a slight tailwind so that riders were able to go further than in previous years. Alan Wratten, the freewheeling specialist from Hertfordshire, won the event followed by local riders, Andy Polakowski and Ifor Jones, in second and third places. Janet Gregory was first in the Ladies while Richard Delf was the first Junior. After the event riders adjourned to the nearby Three Pigeons pub for the prize giving and lunch. Thanks go to Lowri Evans for organising the events and to her team of helpers.

DATC

Last year the DA continued its success in the District Association Tourist Competition (DATC) to win the team event for the third year in a row. This year with 309 out of 355 events completed the competition is incredibly tight. The DA lies in first place in the team event with 619 points; just ahead of South Bucks with 611 points but way ahead of third placed Hertfordshire on 469 points. In the individual competition the DA has two riders, Peter Dilworth and John Hamblett, in the top five positions and a further four riders, Andy Polakowski, David Statham, Lowri Evans and Ifor Jones, in the top twenty. Congratulations to all our members who have taken part.

Section Reports

Anglesey Section

Anglesey Section has rides on the 1st Sunday and 3rd Sunday in the month provided the weather is reasonable. This year they have tended to be about 40 miles with one going to Melin Llynon and the rest to the Gegin at 4 mile bridge except for two which went to the White Lodge caravan park at Newborough. We have also supported the DA events, namely the spring 50 mile reliability run, the Vets' 100 and the Cheshire Cycleway Rides, together with the freewheel and hill climb.

Café Hoppers Section

The Caféhoppers are essentially a bunch of friends. We have met regularly on Tuesdays and Saturdays throughout the year, leaving from the café by Summerfield's in Gwersyllt at 9.30. Most riders arrive for 9.00 to chat, get a brew and decide on the destination. Informality is our watchword. Our rides accommodate a wide range of abilities. This year has seen about 25 different participants including four new regular members with numbers generally fluctuating between 8 and 15. About 10 members are keen Audax riders with several currently well up in the individual DATC competition. This competition has transformed the range of cycling for many members with an increase in off-road and mountain biking as well as participation in one or two longer events. Some members have taken part in Challenge events such as the Wild Wales and The Brian Rourke Challenge. In the summer a small group have been supplementing their road riding with mountain biking at Llandegla and other venues; as far away as Yorkshire.

We have not organized any tours but Steve Davies and Alun Jones did the French Sea-to-Sea and Glynn Jones, Andy Ankers and Des James joined a number of CTC friends on a trip to Ireland. Martin and Scott Thompson enjoyed riding in France where they were initiated into the legions of those who have suffered on the Alpe d' Huez. A large contingent of Caféhoppers are keenly anticipating Dave Statham's early season Spanish jaunt!

But its not all about competition and foreign climes (or should that be climbs?) we have been blessed with dry weather on most of our rides; learning to dodge the showers, and have been able to range

across our beautiful hills, valleys and plains, stopping for lunch and elevenses in cafes, tea-rooms, garden centres and such like. All in good company. See you on the road or in the café.

Chester Section

No report received at the time of writing.

Eryri Section

The CTC Eryri section has had a good year despite the variable weather. We were devastated to hear of the death of Graham Mills earlier in the year. We have had 22 organised rides with average attendance of five, and an average mileage of 30-40miles we also have had several informal rides mostly contacting members by email & phone. Members have attended the Daffodil rides weekend near Ross on Wye. Some have ridden the Anglesey Audax & the sponsored ride round the Snowdon Loop to raise money for the local Air Ambulance. Members have spent money at the York Rally. Eryri section hosted a ladies ride on Anglesey. A weekend at Clun Youth Hostel in memory of our late secretary Geoff Russell was shared with the North Wales tandem club & friends; we have also enjoyed joint rides with North Wales tandem club. Members have attended the DA lunch & the Memorial Ride for Graham Mills. Several members & friends have helped with manning checkpoints & refreshments for the Brian Chapman memorial 600k Audax & the Wild Wales challenge. We meet at the Snowdon Parc pub Waunfawr on the second Thursday of every month at 8pm for a social get together. Though we are a small group we welcome newcomers & holidaymakers to come and ride with us.

Mold Section

Mold Section has suffered a difficult and turbulent year with the loss of its key riding member and DA President, Graham Mills. Despite members offering unqualified support and commitment to continuing to organise frequent club rides, this has proved to be almost impossible to achieve. Every ride we organise whether it was scheduled for Graham's lead or otherwise, happens to tread the route of previous outings when Graham was with us, every cafe now seemingly empty without his presence. We can but hope to remember the good times as the sharpness of our loss dulls in due course. None of this mood of sadness has been dispelled by the inclement weather - not for many a year have we had such a summer soaking. This too has perhaps kept riding numbers low and morale even lower. The future of Mold Section appears to hang in the balance. We will be organising two runs per month with new leaders coming forward, and we will continue to support DA events. Graham would have liked us to continue with our hilly exploration of Welsh lanes with the occasional off-road track thrown in. We owe it to his memory to do so.

Two Mills Section

The section's rides programme was once again arranged by a small committee that met in November and came up with something for the whole of the year ahead; shorter and/or flatter routes out into Cheshire, more challenging, hillier rides in the direction of Wales and one new car assisted to the Trough of Bowland. Section members have also taken part in several Audax and/or DA competition events during the year. We try to offer something for everyone. On the social side, the section enjoyed an evening meal early in February at the Ship Hotel in Parkgate. We followed that up in March with a Sunday lunch at the Golden Groves. Good food in good company to break up the winter months.

The section has travelled away during the year. To Lechlade on the Gloucestershire border for a long weekend in mid May just as the rainy season started! Our ride plans may have been slightly dampened but not spirits. Twenty plus people in an awning on the Saturday evening thoroughly enjoyed a fish and chip supper followed by a bet on the horses DVD style with loads of fake money courtesy of Arthur Miller! Early in August, 12 section members joined the French Semaine Federale, a week long programme of cycling based this year at Perigueux in the Dordogne. This was a great experience with rides suitable for everyone and a massive numbers of cyclists. Over the August bank holiday weekend, 7 members plus dog camped at Melverley, North Shropshire, enjoying day rides in exceptionally quiet lanes and fine weather, for a change!

Members of the section have continued to support a weekly programme of early evening rides from Willaston during the summer months. After many years of organising these rides Ann Taylor indicated her wish to step down. Chris Harris and others have kept the group going, all fairly informal but the support expressed at end of season buffet at the Nag's Head suggests that it is working. Section members continue to support DA events. Many, past and present riders, enjoyed the New Year and September lunches, the slide show on the Himalayas cycle tour and the Presidents ride.

Adele and Margaret Blakeborough kindly organised an order of DA cycle tops open to all DA members. We were of course very saddened by the sudden death of our president, Graham Mills, earlier in the year. Several members of our section attended his funeral in Wrexham. A big thank you to all our rides and event organisers; the section is reliant on your enthusiasm and hard work. Stay with us for the year ahead and try to recruit a friend. We do need new members.

Watson's Wanderers Section

No report received at the time of writing.

Wednesday Section

The Wednesday Section has had another successful year with a full programme of rides. The winter programme of shorter distance, 'make your own way' rides has continued to be a very successful way of members of all riding abilities being able to meet socially over lunch. Increasing age and physical disabilities have meant that some older members have had to reduce their mileages as a result of which they cannot participate fully in the longer summer rides. Other members have seen their cycling activities severely curtailed or halted altogether as a result of illness or disability. We wish them well. On the other hand, the Section has gained a number of new members – several of them finding out about our activities through the Internet. We hope that they will continue to enjoy riding with the Section and joining in Section activities over the years to come. January 2008 will see the 25th Anniversary of the foundation of the Section by the late Charles Allan and our current Life President, Angus Mc McCullough.

Wrexham Section

The Wrexham Section has had an eventful year with rides to most parts of the region. Unfortunately, due to work commitments Des James, the Section Secretary, was unable to ride most of them. Nevertheless the section has ridden on every 1st Saturday and 3rd Sunday throughout the year. The Wrexham Section will probably cease to exist at the end of the year as no-one is currently willing to take on the role of secretary. Its place will be filled by the Wrexham Cafe Hoppers Section which ride every Tuesday and Saturday.

Roads, Routes and Rights

This year has seen a breakthrough of sorts when Chester City Council found the funds to demolish the wall under the railway viaduct by the Roodee Racecourse so linking the two parts of the River Dee Promenade. With the DA represented at the opening ceremony the route was declared officially open. It is now possible to cycle from the Blue Moon café on the Groves past the racecourse to The Cop to join the River Dee Cycle path to Hawarden Bridge and beyond. Well almost! There is still one missing element; a new bridge over the canal lock linking the canal to the Dee.

A rather more important bridge link is the Lodge Lane crossing of the A5117 where your Rights Officer and National Councillor have been instrumental in bringing forward the date for the completion of the new pedestrian/cyclists bridge. This seems to be well on the way to completion although the approach roads may take a little longer.

Pressure to open up the route across Burton Marshes has continued from cyclists and local residents alike, but with opposition from both the Army and more recently the RSPB hopes of a satisfactory outcome seem to be receding. Elsewhere in the North West progress is being made on opening up canal towpaths to provide quiet, traffic free cycle routes.

Unlike most schemes the Sustrans Connect 2 project is dependent on your support. This is one of four projects competing for a single grant of up to £50 million from the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks: The Peoples Millions. The winning project will be decided by a public vote on television on the 10th December 2007. If Sustrans are successful in winning the vote, local travel on foot and cycle will be transformed in 79 communities, including both Chester and Rhyl in the DA area. The Chester scheme includes a new cycle bridge over the Dee linking Sandy Lane to the Dee Meadows, a much improved crossing alongside the railway bridge over the Dee and the extension of the millennium cycle route to Guilden Sutton. In Rhyl a new bridge across the River Clwyd is proposed at Foryd Harbour connecting to the coastal path. The success of this bid depends crucially on your vote on the 10th December so put a note in your diary now.

In North Wales there are three CTC Right to Ride representatives, Roy Spilsbury and Maurice Clarke for Conwy and Denbighshire, and Neal Hockley for Gwynedd. Graham Mills was also a rep for

Denbighshire at the time of his untimely death. Flintshire and Wrexham are currently unrepresented. All the present reps have established sound links with their key local authority officers, councillors and work closely with Sustrans on matters of shared interest. That said, Roy and Maurice are engaged in a prolonged campaign in Conwy to counter anti-cycling prejudice. Our reps are determined to press on with the battle for cycle access to the North Promenade, and are confident of success in the not too distant future. Similarly with the Conwy Estuary cycle path which has also involved protracted lobbying, and there are still unresolved issues.

Last year I highlighted the case of Daniel Cadden of Telford who was fined £100 with £200 of costs for cycling on the road rather than a hazardous and poorly maintained cycle path. This year I am pleased to report that Daniel, with the backing of the CTC and Cyclists' Defence Fund won his case on appeal. This case clearly demonstrates the importance of CTC's campaigning work, the Cyclists' Defence Fund which financed his appeal and locally the work of our Rights Officer and Right to Ride representatives. To help support this work your Committee, on the suggestion of a member at last years AGM, made a donation of £100 to the Cyclists' Defence Fund on behalf of the DA.

Events for 2008

Programme of events for 2008

Date	Event	Organiser
1 st January	New Years Day – McLeans Pub & The Carden Arms Tilston	Arthur Miller Dave Hill
16 th March	Spring Tourist Trial	Janet Gregory
3 rd May	Treasure Hunt & Map Reading	Lowri Evans (CTC Cymru)
31 st May	Aqueduct 170 km Audax	Stan Thomas (provisional)
15 th June	Cheshire Cycleway Rides	Dorothy Clift/Hazel McDougall
6 th July	Vets' 100	<i>To be decided</i>
<i>Date to be decided</i>	Welsh Festival of Cycling	CTC Cymru
6 th September	DA Lunch	<i>To be decided</i>
28 th September	President's Ride	<i>New President</i>
4 th October	Llysfasi Hill Climb & Freewheeling	Lowri Evans
5 th October	Mills Hills 150 km Audax	Stan Thomas (provisional)
2 nd November	DA AGM Kinnerton	<i>New Secretary</i>

Last year mention was made of the plans to rededicate the CTC Winged Wheel plaque at Corwen. The reinstatement of this very rare "Repairers to the CTC" version of the Winged Wheel was a project very close to Graham Mills's heart. Unfortunately due to technical problems as a result of graphite and carbon leeching from the original cast the project has been delayed. It is hoped that the use of a special sealant from Germany will overcome the problem so allowing the painting/enamelling to proceed. Once the work is completed a date will be announced for the rededication of the plaque.

The Year Ahead

After four enjoyable years as your DA Secretary I will be standing down at the end of this AGM and handing over to my successor. I would like to pay tribute to your Committee who have worked extremely hard on your behalf throughout this last year: a year that has been something of a challenge to us all. Next year you will have a new Secretary and a new Committee who I am sure will be just as dedicated. I feel certain you will get behind them and give them the backing and support they need and deserve. One thing I can predict with some degree of certainty, is that the coming year will be a year of change.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to work with you on behalf of Chester & North Wales CTC.

Bryan Wade
Secretary
Chester & North Wales CTC

27th October 2007